

**Business Plan for  
BLM Colorado River Valley Field Office  
Campgrounds and Day Use Sites**

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management, Colorado  
Northwest District  
Colorado River Valley Field Office  
[Date Approved]**

**Business Plan for  
BLM Colorado River Valley Field Office  
Campgrounds and Day Use Sites**

**RECOMMENDATIONS, REVIEWS and APPROVALS**

Recommended by:

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Outdoor Recreation Planner

Date

Reviewed by:

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Assistant Field Manager for Resources

Date

Approved By:

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Field Manager

Date

This business plan was prepared pursuant to the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 2004 (P.L. 108-447) and BLM recreation fee program policy. It establishes future management goals and priorities for the campground and day use site fee program in the Colorado River Valley Field Office.



# United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer to:  
8300 (CON040)

December 11, 2018

Dear Reader,

The *Draft Business Plan for BLM Colorado River Valley Field Office Campgrounds and Day Use Sites* is available for public review. This public review is the first step in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposal to begin charging or increasing fees at six campgrounds and one day use site managed by the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) in northwestern Colorado.

Under the criteria defined in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 2004 (FLREA), the BLM will present the fee proposal to the Northwest Resource Advisory Council and publish the proposal in the *Federal Register* before implementing the fees. The CRVFO currently anticipates implementing the fee structure described in this draft business plan during the summer of 2020, if approved.

The CRVFO manages six campgrounds that annually provide over 2,500 visitors with outstanding public land camping opportunities. Currently only two of these campgrounds require fees for camping, and these fees are not enough to pay for the cleaning and maintenance of all six campgrounds. The new fee structure is required for CRVFO to continue maintaining and managing these campgrounds currently and into the future. All fees collected will be used specifically to manage these areas.

Under the proposal, the BLM would begin charging \$20 per night at the newly constructed Prince Creek Campground in Pitkin County, as well as at the Catamount, Lyon's Gulch, and Pinball campgrounds along the Colorado River in Eagle County. There is currently no fee at these sites.

Additionally, the current \$10 per night fee at Gypsum and Wolcott campgrounds, located along the Eagle River in Eagle County, would increase to \$20. The BLM would charge \$4 per person at its group camping sites at Gypsum, Lyon's Gulch and Prince Creek campgrounds. A \$5 day-use fee would be charged at the Wolcott Day Use Site on the Eagle River near Wolcott.

The objective of the *Draft Business Plan for BLM CRVFO Campgrounds and Day Use Sites* is to provide you with the opportunity to review and comment on how recreation fees have been and

are planned to be used in the CRVFO. Comments may be mailed to BLM, Campground Business Plan Comment, 2300 River Frontage Road, Silt, CO 81652 or emailed to [mgurtler@blm.gov](mailto:mgurtler@blm.gov) (put “campground business plan comment” in the subject line). Comments are due by January 25, 2019. Thank you for your interest in your public lands.

Sincerely,  
*/s/ Gloria Tibbetts*  
Gloria Tibbetts  
Acting Field Manager

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## Introduction

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the “Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, 2004” (FLREA). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) originally began collecting fees for the recreational use of public lands under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976) – known as the “organic act.” The FLREA recognizes the BLM’s authority to collect an Expanded Recreation Amenity Fee for the recreational use of certain areas. FLREA allows collected Expanded Recreation Amenities Fees to be retained locally and outlines how revenues are to be used for such things as facility repair, maintenance, enhancement, interpretation, visitor information, visitor services, visitor needs assessments, signs, habitat restoration, law enforcement related to public use and recreation, and direct operating or capital costs associated with the Recreation and Visitor Services program. At the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO), the recreational use of campgrounds within the field office is managed through the Recreation Use Permit Program.

FLREA guidelines require that each fee program have a business plan that thoroughly discusses fees and explains how fees are consistent with the criteria set forth in the Act. Business plans are to assist management in determining the appropriateness and level of fees, cost of administering fee programs, and provide a structured communication and marketing plan. The primary purpose of the plans is to serve as public notification of the objectives for use of recreation fee revenues and to provide the public an opportunity to comment on these objectives. This business plan is subject to public review and is the CRVFO’s official documentation in the event of an audit.

## Background and Authorities

This business plan has been prepared to meet the criteria defined in the “Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act 2004” (P.L.108-447). The authorities and regulations for this business plan, including fee collection, are:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), 1976**, [Public Law 94-579], contains the BLM’s general land use management authority over the public lands, and establishes outdoor recreation as one of the principal uses of those lands. Section 302 (b) of FLPMA directs the Secretary of the Interior to regulate through permits or other instruments the use of the public lands. Section 303 of FLPMA contains BLM’s authority to enforce the regulations and impose penalties.
- **The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA), 2004 as revised in 2014**, repealed applicable portions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and replaced BLM’s authority to collect recreation fees in 2004. This current law authorizes BLM to collect recreation fees at sites that meet certain requirements, allows BLM to keep the fee revenues at the local offices where they were collected, and directs how BLM will manage and utilize these revenues. FLREA also established the America the Beautiful – The National Parks and Federal Recreational Pass Program.

This business plan has also been prepared pursuant to all applicable BLM recreation fee program policies and guidance, including:

- BLM Recreation Fee Proposals Step-by-Step Review & Approval Process, March 22, 2007
- BLM Instruction Memorandum 2007-028: *Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act – Final Public Participation Policy for Certain Recreation Fee Adjustments and Proposed New Fee Sites/Areas*

The BLM strives to manage recreation and visitor services to serve the diverse outdoor recreation demands of our visitors while helping them to maintain sustainable setting conditions needed to conserve public lands so the visitor's desired recreation choices remain available. The BLM's goals for delivering recreation benefits from BLM-administered lands to the American people and their communities are:

- Improve access to appropriate recreation opportunities;
- Ensure a quality experience and enjoyment of natural and cultural resources; and
- Provide for and receive fair value in recreation.

This business plan will assist the CRVFO in meeting these visitor service goals. This plan covers the two previously authorized fee campgrounds operated by the CRVFO (Gypsum and Wolcott Campgrounds). This plan also applies to four existing campgrounds (Catamount, Pinball, Prince Creek, and Lyon's Gulch Campgrounds), three group sites (Gypsum, Lyon's Gulch, and Prince Creek), and day use at the Wolcott Day Use Site (includes the boat ramp).

## **A. Colorado River Valley Field Office Campground Program**

### Administrative Unit

The CRVFO manages approximately 567,000 surface acres of public lands in Eagle, Garfield, Mesa, Pitkin, and Routt counties in Colorado. The CRVFO is located in Colorado Congressional District 3 and includes the towns of Parachute, Rifle, Silt, New Castle, Glenwood Springs, Carbondale, Basalt, Aspen, Gypsum and Eagle in close proximity to BLM-managed lands.

### Colorado River Valley Field Office Recreation Program and Visitation

The CRVFO has a diverse and extensive recreation program. Areas such as the Colorado River, the Eagle River, the Roaring Fork River, the Roan Plateau, Red Hill, The Crown and Castle Peak provide gold medal trout fishing, famed hunting, popular mountain biking, climbing, and celebrated off-highway vehicle riding. These recreation resources are enjoyed by both local residents and tourists from outside the area.

The White River National Forest, which is the most visited National Forest in the nation, borders much of the BLM-managed lands in the CRVFO and sees upwards of 13 million visitors each year. Visitation to BLM lands in the CRVFO is high, totaling approximately 1 million visits in 2017. This visitation is a small portion of the visitation of the surrounding White River National

Forest, but visitation trends between the Forest and the adjacent BLM-managed lands have grown at a similar rate.

### Campground Program Results

The goal of the campground program in the CRVFO is to meet demand for campground services. In order to meet the demand, the field office is seeking to increase campground revenues. Campers at BLM campgrounds provide a business base for many local entrepreneurs, as the campgrounds bring customers directly to the local community.

The campers benefit by:

- (1) having a low-cost campsite or group campsite available for their use
- (2) improved public lands facilities (i.e. clean toilets)
- (3) outstanding camping-based recreation opportunities
- (4) a focused opportunity to enhance outdoor skills, build group and family relationships, and introduce youth to the natural world
- (5) venues at which to enjoy their public lands

The local community benefits by:

- 1) the development of business opportunities in the outdoor recreation sector e.g. river running companies, guide services, mountain bike rental companies)
- 2) the development of business opportunities in the general retail sector (e.g. grocery stores, gear stores)
- 3) the development of business opportunities in the hospitality sector (e.g. restaurants)
- 4) the provision of jobs for its citizens and tax revenues for local government
- 5) improved services and quality of life through facility development and resource protection

The BLM benefits by:

- 1) meeting its land management goals, including protection of cultural and natural resources
- 2) partnering with campers as stewards of the public lands
- 3) providing for a more stable (and hence knowledgeable) BLM work force
- 4) lowering costs by developing improved business management systems
- 5) obtaining revenues to use for program management and facilities enhancement.

The positive results summarized above allow campers to vacation on BLM lands in a responsible manner. As users of the public lands, campers have a vested interest in their sustainability. The local community gains in its most important economic sector, and participants and the public benefit by increased opportunities to enjoy public lands.

### Applicable Plans

Management in the CRVFO is guided by the Approved Colorado River Valley Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP), which was signed in 2015. Specific decisions were made concerning the campground program. These are summarized in decision:



## REC-MA-10: Camping Restrictions

*Close the following BLM lands to camping and overnight use outside designated campsites and developed campgrounds (12,500 acres):*

- *Within 0.25 mile of the Fisher Creek Cemetery Road*
- *Within 300 feet from the centerline of North Hardscrabble Access Road (Spring Creek) in Township 5 South, Range 85 West, Track 80, Sixth Principal Meridian (including parking)*
- *Glenwood Canyon in the Horseshoe Canyon (Bend) area in Township 6 South, Range 89 West Section 3, Sixth Principal Meridian*
- *Within 0.25 mile of Deep Creek in Township 4 South, Range 86 West, Section 30 and Township 4 South, Range 87 West, Section 25, Sixth Principal Meridian*
- *Within 0.25 mile of Prince Creek Road (Pitkin County Road 7)*
- *Outside of designated campsites and developed campgrounds within the Eagle River ERMA*
- *Garfield Creek Colorado River Access Site and on surrounding BLM lands in Township 6 South, Range 91 West, Sections 7 and 8*
- *Silt Mesa ERMA (BLM lands south of the crest of the Grand Hogback mountain in (T. 5 S., R. 91 W.; T. 5 S., R. 92 W; T. 6 S., R. 91 W; T. 6 S., R. 92 W)*
- *Thompson Creek area within 0.25 mile of USFS Road 305*
- *Red Hill SRMA (north of Carbondale, Colorado)*
- *East Glenwood Canyon Trailhead area north of the Colorado River in Township 5 South, Range 87 West, Sections 14-15, Sixth Principal Meridian*
- *South Canyon Recreation Site and surrounding area in Township 6 South, Range 90 West, Section 2, Sixth Principal Meridian*
- *Ute Trailhead (near Dotsero) west and north of the Colorado River in Township 4 South, Range 86 West, Sections 31-32 and Township 5 South, Range 86 West, Sections 5-6, Sixth Principal Meridian.*

### Description of the Current CRVFO Campground and Day Use Site Program with Proposed Changes

**Table 1. Current CRVFO Campgrounds and Sites with Proposed Changes**

Name of Site	Location	No. of Ind. Sites	No. of Group Sites	Current Individual Site Fee	Proposed Changes <sup>1</sup>
Gypsum Campground	Near Gypsum, CO	6	2 proposed	\$10.00 per site	\$20.00 per individual site, \$4.00 per person in group site.

<sup>1</sup> Group Site fees include a \$20.00 reservation fee and a \$4.00 per person per night fee. Group site reservation holders are required to pay for the minimum group size at each site (from 10 to 15 people). That is, a site with a minimum of 15 people and with a \$4.00 per person per night would cost \$60.00 per night for 15 people, and \$4.00 more per night for each extra person.

Name of Site	Location	No. of Ind. Sites	No. of Group Sites	Current Individual Site Fee	Proposed Changes <sup>1</sup>
Wolcott Campground	Near Wolcott, Colorado	6	0	\$10.00 per site	\$20.00 per site
Catamount Campground	Colorado River Road MP 27	5	0	FREE	\$20.00 per site
Pinball Campground	Colorado River Road MP 19	1	0	FREE	\$20.00 per site with expansion to up to 4 individual sites
Lyon's Gulch Campground	Colorado River Road MP 3.7	5	1 proposed	FREE	\$20.00 per individual site, \$4.00 per person in group site, with expansion to up to 10 individual sites.
Prince Creek Campground	West of Carbondale, Colorado	10	2	FREE	\$20.00 per individual site, \$4.00 per person in group site.
Wolcott Day Use Site - 6 parking spaces currently, proposed to add approximately 24 more	Near Wolcott, Colorado			FREE	\$5.00 per vehicle per day

#### Site Backgrounds:

The campground fees for the Gypsum and Wolcott campgrounds were implemented originally in October 2000 and haven't been changed since. Original construction, as well as all large maintenance projects were funded with appropriated fees. The CRVFO has never charged fees for group site camping. In the nearly 20 years since the fees were implemented, costs for facility maintenance and patrols have consistently consumed more than the total income collected from the sites. This doesn't allow for continued capital improvements without supplementing with appropriated funds. Needed capital improvements include installation of double locking pipe safes, replacement of two pit toilets, repair of eight pit toilets, gravelling of sites and roads, installation of tent pads, replacement of damaged picnic tables, replacement of rusted fire rings, and installation of new sites to accommodate increased use.

The Gypsum Campground is located along Interstate 70 and the Eagle River. In recent years, it has grown in popularity due to increased knowledge of the site. The campground contains six campsites with picnic tables and fire rings. The site also includes two restroom buildings, trash collection, and a day use picnic area. The BLM plans to convert the day use site into two campsites and a group site, making a future total of nine sites. Currently the fees are not covering the maintenance costs of the campground. An increase in user fees would alleviate the stress put on other funding to provide maintenance and improvement needs (gravel, addition of two group sites, replacement of aging pit toilets, etc.) at the Gypsum Campground.

The Wolcott Recreation Site is a very popular site in the CRVFO. It is primarily used for day use (river access, boat ramp, rock climbing, picnicking, and fishing) along the Eagle River. There is currently a camping fee for the campground and no day use fee for the boat ramp and day-use picnic area. The day use site has one parking area with approximately six parking

spaces and one boat ramp, and it is constantly congested. In the past several years the CRVFO has seen a large increase in day use, which has led to over-crowding and resource damage. Increased use has also placed an unfunded strain on CRVFO maintenance staff and made it difficult for maintenance staff to keep up with basic sanitation at the facilities. Beginning in 2012, the BLM entered into a partnership with a permitted river guiding company to improve site conditions. Since then Timberline Tours has paid for trash collection service costs for most of the season to make the site more pleasant for their clients, which also helped the general recreating public. Their contribution has totaled approximately \$1200 per year. While this has been an effective short-term solution, it is not an equitable long-term solution.

Day-users park in the campground and along the entrance road that is shared with the campground. The CRVFO hopes to develop approximately 30 formal delineated parking spaces to accommodate the use. The current use numbers between May and September are an average of 71 vehicles per day based on traffic counter data, which doesn't include vehicles that parked along the adjacent Highway 6. The fee of \$5 per vehicle per day matches the parking fees at other similar river facilities managed by the adjacent BLM Kremmling Field Office and Eagle County. Funding from these fees would allow for increased staff visits and improved infrastructure to handle the use at the site.

The Pinball Campground is a seldom used, one-site campground within the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area. The site includes a picnic table, metal fire ring, and a vault toilet. There is a large amount of parking, which allows for RVs to dry camp in the parking lot. The campground is underutilized because the boat ramp is 0.5 miles downstream. With the ability to collect fees, the CRVFO hopes to improve the campground area to include more campsites (up to 10 sites), relocate the boat ramp, and maintain the existing facilities. With increased amenities, a nearby boat ramp, and separated parking, public use would likely increase.

The Prince Creek Campground was completed in 2018 and includes two small campgrounds within the Prince Creek corridor. These each have five individual sites and one group site for a total of 10 individual sites and two group sites. Charging fees will allow the CRVFO to provide maintenance and patrols in this area. This area was popular with dispersed campers and is anticipated to be a very popular developed camping area requiring intensive maintenance.

The Lyon's Gulch Campground is a popular campground with five sites within the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area. The sites include picnic tables, metal fire rings, and a vault toilet. The Lyon's Gulch Recreation Site also includes a boat ramp and parking. In 2012, a mud slide impacted three camp sites. Due to this safety risk, CRVFO is currently looking at an alternative location. The new campground location would include as many as 10 campsites, with one being a group site. The cost to create safer campsites, as well as improve the restroom, parking, and boat ramp, is projected to cost more than \$100,000. Under the current fee structure these costs would have to be covered through appropriated funds and Special Recreation Permit fees from commercial guiding (commercial river running, fishing guiding, etc.). A campground fee will allow for the users to contribute to the costs of maintenance and improvements.

The Catamount Campground is a popular campground with four sites within the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area. Many users camp at this location for either river trips or hunting trips. The campsites include picnic tables and metal fire rings. The site also includes a restroom, boat ramp, and parking. Historically Catamount was used for some camping and for launching boats to run the stretch of river downstream from the site. Eagle County purchased new river access upstream of the site recently. This has dramatically increased use as river runners and fishers use the site for both launching boats and for taking boats out from the stretch of river above Catamount. With campground user fees, the BLM could create a designated parking area separate from the campground and gradually improve the campground.

## **B. Expenditures/Operating Costs/Fee Calculations**

The CRVFO maintains infrastructure that supports its campground operation. The largest expenses are staff wages for the bi-weekly (at a minimum) cleaning of each of the six campgrounds and their associated fire rings and toilets, and law enforcement patrols. Maintenance duties are performed by a seasonal workforce during the peak season and by permanent field office staff during off-peak times. This crew is responsible for cleaning the campgrounds, maintaining the infrastructure in the campgrounds such as painting toilet buildings, repairing tables, replacing fire-rings, as well as completing campground collections. . Landscaping work at the campgrounds is also undertaken by the maintenance crew, including planting new trees and watering existing ones, controlling invasive weeds, and maintaining gravel in sites, walkways and roads. Garbage service is available at the two fee campgrounds; a local garbage disposal company has the contract for the campground dumpsters. Garbage service would be extended to other campgrounds if fees are approved and as conditions warrant. Toilet effluent is pumped as needed through another local contractor. The costs of cleaning and maintaining the campgrounds includes buying toilet paper, garbage bags, and cleaning supplies, as well as paying for garbage and sewage contracts.

. The program also supports government vehicles and equipment used to support patrols, maintenance work, resource and visitor use monitoring, and law enforcement. Operating costs, labor, and revenues are outlined in Tables 2 and 3 below.

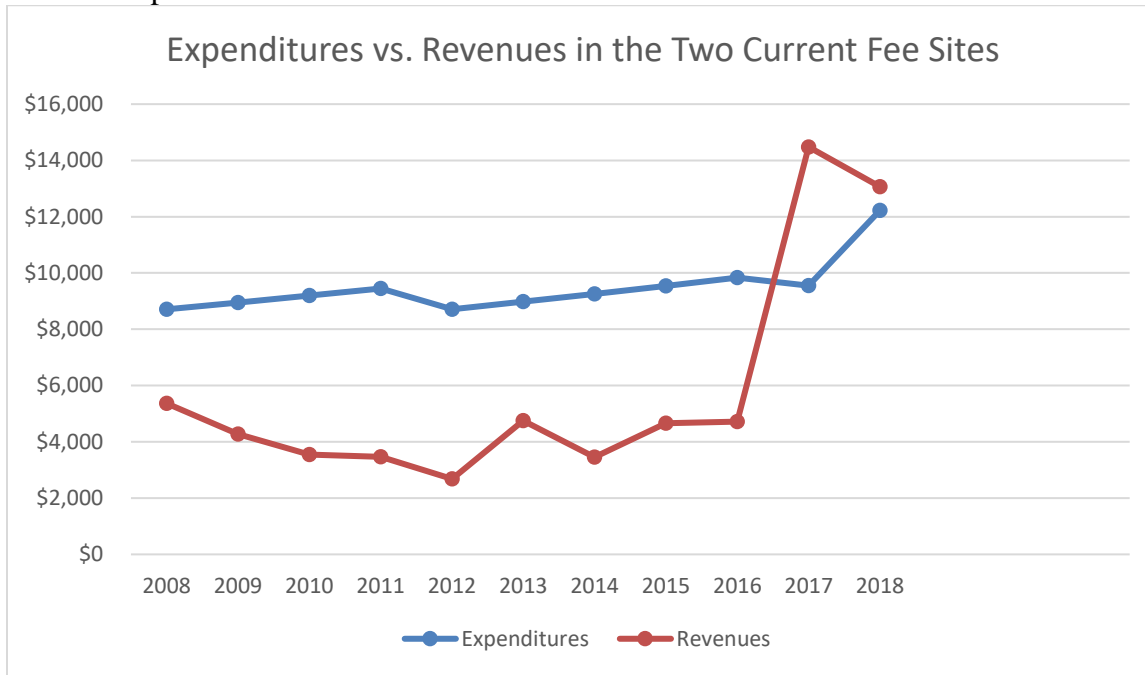
**Table 2: Actual Basic Expenditures of Campground Fees in the Two Current Fee Sites**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Staff Labor</b>	<b>Operations Costs</b>	<b>Total Annual Expenditures</b>	<b>Campground Fee Revenues</b>	<b>Net Gain/Loss</b>
2008	\$4,782*	\$3,929*	\$8,712*	\$5,366	(\$3,346)
2009	\$4,930*	\$4,020*	\$8,950*	\$4,273	(\$4,677)
2010	\$5,082*	\$4,113*	\$9,196*	\$3,543	(\$5,653)
2011	\$5,239*	\$4,209*	\$9,449*	\$3,470	(\$5,979)
2012	\$5,402*	\$3,309*	\$8,711*	\$2,681	(\$6,030)
2013	\$5,569*	\$3,411*	\$8,980*	\$4,751	(\$4,229)
2014	\$5,741*	\$3,517*	\$9,258*	\$3,456	(\$5,802)
2015	\$5,918*	\$3,625*	\$9,544*	\$4,657	(\$4,887)

Fiscal Year	Staff Labor	Operations Costs	Total Annual Expenditures	Campground Fee Revenues	Net Gain/Loss
2016	\$6,102	\$3,738	\$9,840	\$4,717	(\$5,123)
2017	\$7,376	\$2,176	\$9,552	\$14,480	\$4,928
2018	\$8,380	\$3,845	\$12,225	\$13,068	\$843

\*Estimated based on best available data.

Graph 1.

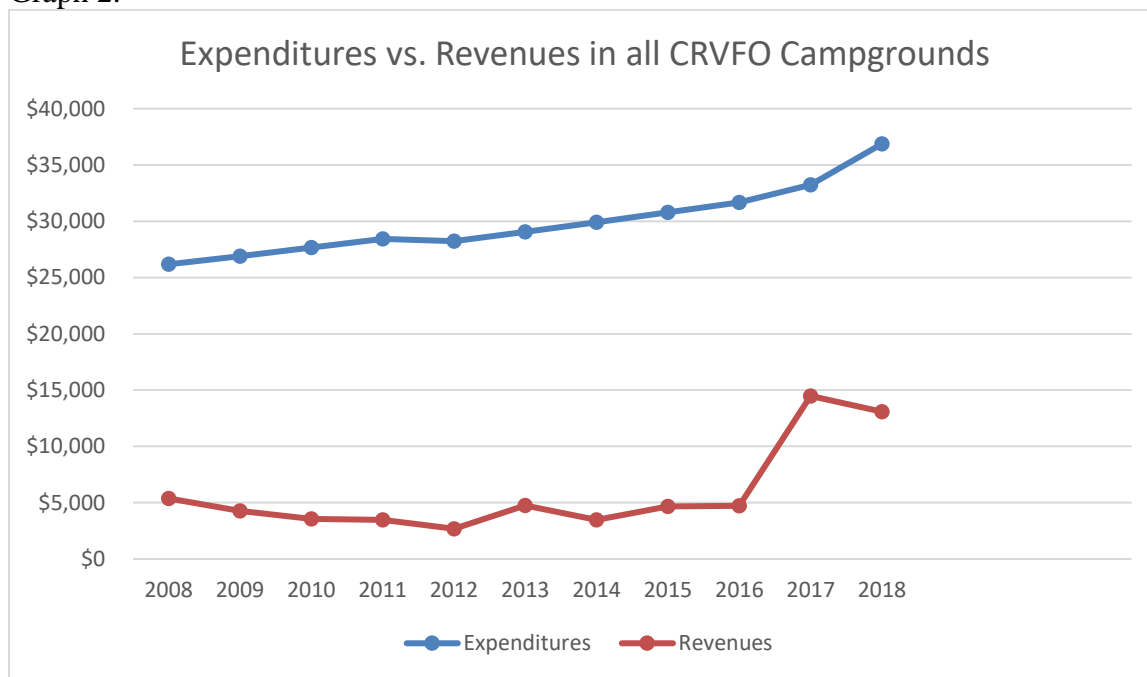


**Table 3: Actual Basic Expenditures of Campground Fees in all CRVFO Campgrounds**

Fiscal Year	Staff Labor	Operations Costs	Total Annual Expenditures	Campground Fee Revenues	Net Gain/Loss
2008	\$20,656*	\$5,519*	\$26,175*	\$5,366	(\$20,656)
2009	\$21,295*	\$5,610*	\$26,905*	\$4,273	(\$21,295)
2010	\$21,954*	\$5,703*	\$27,657*	\$3,543	(\$21,954)
2011	\$22,633*	\$5,799*	\$28,432*	\$3,470	(\$22,633)
2012	\$23,333*	\$4,899*	\$28,232*	\$2,681	(\$23,333)
2013	\$24,055*	\$5,001*	\$29,056*	\$4,751	(\$24,055)
2014	\$24,799*	\$5,107*	\$29,906*	\$3,456	(\$24,799)
2015	\$25,566*	\$5,215*	\$30,781*	\$4,657	(\$25,566)
2016	\$26,356	\$5,328	\$31,684	\$4,717	(\$26,967)
2017	\$28,809	\$4,419	\$33,228	\$14,480	(\$21,743)
2018	\$31,319	\$5,558	\$36,878**	\$13,068	(\$24,878)

\*Estimated based on best available data, \*\*These costs do not include the new Prince Creek campground completed late in 2018

Graph 2.



Additional costs to the government of administering the campground program include managerial support, work by recreation planners and office overhead, including information services to the public. These costs are generally borne by the Recreation Resources Management Account (appropriated funds) or the Annual Operation & Maintenance Account (also appropriated funds) and aren't reflected in the figures above as they are difficult to separate from other duties in managerial staff. The largest costs that aren't reflected in these tables are capital improvements, which have traditionally been covered with appropriated funds. Table 4 gives a good sense of the scales of these costs. While labor and operations costs are in the thousands of dollars per year, capital improvements are in the tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars spread over the life of the facility. Replacement of a double vault toilet alone can run upwards of \$45,000 with installation.

#### Current BLM Campground Revenues

Currently, campers at the four existing developed campgrounds where no fees are charged and users of the Wolcott Day Use site are being partially subsidized by those camping at the two campgrounds in the CRVFO that do charge fees, and are substantially subsidized using appropriated funds.

#### Future Expenditures for On-going Program Services

Priority expenditures for the campground program include all aspects of maintaining current levels of service to campers. This includes maintaining a standard of cleanliness that would promote visitor health and safety. The level of service includes on-site patrol and fee collection, government vehicle costs, regular maintenance of campground facilities including the toilets, fire grills, and campground roads and trails. Table 2 above illustrates that these basic costs can, in good years, be

covered through the fees from the sites. However as Table 3 shows, the sites with no fees are heavily subsidized through appropriated money.

#### Future Expenditures for Program Infrastructure

There are several sorely needed unfunded capital improvements that are a priority for CRVFO campgrounds. These include new double vault restrooms at Catamount, Gypsum, and Wolcott, a second boat ramp at the popular Wolcott day use area to separate commercial and private boating use, an enlarged and improved parking area for Wolcott, improvement of a group camping area at the Gypsum Campground, and the construction of a new Lyon's Gulch campground away from the current boat ramp to separate uses and move overnight use away from a potential flooding hazard. These improvements alone are estimated to cost conservatively \$400,000.

#### Costs of Operating the Campground Program

Both appropriated funds and campground fee funds are used to cover the costs of operating the BLM's campground program. Prior to 2002, appropriated funds covered the entire cost of operating the program with far fewer facilities and staff. In 2002, campground fees became available to supplement appropriated funds. Table 3 shows that the total campground program, including non-fee sites, is still substantially subsidized through appropriated funds. The CRVFO receives approximately \$40,000 for its recreation maintenance budget. All of that money goes towards maintaining these sites. Any expenses beyond what that maintenance budget and the campground fee money can bear (usually approximately \$25,000 when you include capital improvements) comes from the general recreation budget. Conversely Table 2 shows that within our fee sites operating costs are nearly, although not completely, covered through user fees. These operations costs do not include any planned capital improvements. As Table 4 shows, when factoring in the planned capital improvements and with fees remaining unchanged over the next 10 years, the percent of costs for the campground program covered through user fees drops to below 10%. Anticipated appropriated fund reductions in the CRVFO fiscal year 2019 and 2020 budgets for recreation management are expected to result in increased utilization of fee funds to cover program costs in 2019 and beyond.

**Table 4: Revenues and Expenditures with Capital Costs Under Current Fee Structure**

	<b>Revenues</b>	<b>Operations Costs</b>	<b>Planned Capital Improvements</b>	<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>Net Gain/Loss</b>	<b>Percent covered by fees</b>
Per year on average	\$5,860	\$29,903	\$40,000	\$69,903	(\$64,043)	~8%
Over ten years	\$58,600	\$299,030	\$400,000	\$699,030	(\$640,430)	~8%

If the campground program were to be supported by fee revenue alone (that is, without appropriated funding), the camping fee would be insufficient to cover expenditures of not only



capital improvements but even of basic program costs. With no additional fee money and no appropriated funds, , operation costs would be reduced to cover only basic cleaning and campground services in only the fee sites. Very limited or no capital improvements could occur under this scenario.

#### Planned Fee Adjustments pegged to Consumer Price Index

None of the costs associated with the campground program are fixed. As inflation increases the costs of labor, materials, contractors, and supplies all increase at a commensurate rate. It can be difficult to calculate these increases; however the BLM and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) both use a Consumer Price Index (CPI) as an estimate in other programs. The BLM uses the National Income and Product Accounts from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis to calculate periodic fee adjustments in the Special Recreation Permit Program and CPW uses a targeted CPI from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for the Denver-Metro area in calculating fees for their out of state hunting licenses. To keep up with rising costs, the CRVFO proposes the following system to calculate fees for our fee sites outlined above. We would use CPI through the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics similar to what CPW uses. However, we would target the CPI closer to rural Western Colorado by using the monthly Western US CPI published at the following website: <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/regional-resources.htm>. This CPI targets the entire western US outside of the large metro areas that have their own CPIs calculated separately. While this isn't a CPI for only Western Colorado, it does target the rural west and is the closest CPI to the realities in our area. A yearly average of this CPI is published every January. This yearly average would be added to the fees for the campground and day use site and when the increase or decrease reached a one-dollar increment for per person fees and a two-dollar increment for campsite fees, the fees would be changed in accordance. For example, with a \$20.00 fee for individual campsites, a 10% increase in the CPI would lead to a two-dollar increase in fees to \$22.00. Typically, the CPI increases approximately 3% a year. Thus it would likely take 3-4 years to increase the fees by two dollars. For group sites, a 25% increase in the CPI would lead to a one-dollar increase. This would mean that if the CPI continued at 3% per year, groups sites would likely see a price increase to five dollars per person per night in 6-7 years. This would create a more sustainable and consistent funding source that would increase assurances for users that the program could continue to provide regular maintenance and necessary capital improvements into the future.

#### Fair Market Value Fee Calculation Method

This section of the business plan used the Fair Market Assessment approach to calculate the proposed fee changes. The Fair Market Assessment approach compares the fees charged at similar campgrounds in the area that are being administered by federal and state land management agencies. In addition, fees charged by several privately operated campgrounds are also included for comparison. Table 5 presents the individual site campground fee at various locations.



**Table 5: A Comparison of Campground Fees in the Area**

Note: Fees current as of 2018

<b>Campground Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Campground Fee(s)</b>	<b>Amenities Offered</b>
<b>Public Campgrounds</b>			
<b>Current BLM</b> campground fees	CRVFO BLM	\$10 per fee site. No entrance or reservation fee. Most sites are free.	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, tent pads, patrols.
Redstone	White River National Forest	\$28 - \$34 per site	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, host services, water
Sweetwater Lake	White River National Forest	\$8 per site	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, patrols
Trappers Lake Campgrounds	White River National Forest	\$20 per site plus \$6 per site for each additional vehicle past one	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, host services, water
Fulford Cave	White River National Forest	\$8 per site	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays
Meadow Lake	White River National Forest	\$20 per site, \$5 day use fee	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays
Meadow Ridge	White River National Forest	\$20 per site, \$5 day use fee	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays
Difficult Group Site	White River National Forest	\$85 per night, up to 30 people	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, water
Bogan Flats Group Site	White River National Forest	\$135 per night, up to 50 people	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills, water
Pumphouse Campground	Kremmling BLM	\$10 per site	Toilets, picnic tables, fire grills
<b>Privately Owned Campgrounds<sup>1</sup></b>			
River Dance RV Park	private	\$39 for RV (2 people) \$25-45 for tent (2 people) \$5 each additional person	Flush toilets, showers, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, water, electricity
KOA Silt	private	\$71 for RV (4 people) \$35 for tent (4 people) \$5 each additional person	Flush toilets, showers, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, water, electricity
Ami's Acres	private	Tent sites \$28 per vehicle and two people, \$3 per each additional person	Flush toilets, showers, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, water, electricity

<sup>1</sup> Does not include taxes or reservation fees

Campground Name	Agency	Campground Fee(s)	Amenities Offered
Glenwood Canyon Resort	private	\$65 per night, 3 night minimum (4 people) for tent  \$83 per night, 3 night minimum (4 people) for RV	Flush toilets, showers, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, water, electricity, pool
Crystal River KOA	private	\$80 for RV (4 people), 2 day minimum \$40 for tent (4 people), 2 day minimum \$5 each additional person	Flush toilets, showers, picnic tables, fire grills, parking bays, water, electricity

The analysis of the value of the CRVFO BLM campground fee shows that the proposed \$20.00 rate for individual sites would be somewhere in the middle range of fees charged for the use of other public campground areas nearby and substantially lower than private campgrounds. The proposed fee structure for parking is very similar to other federal and county recreational parking fees. The proposed fee structure for the group camping is substantially lower than both other public and privately owned group campgrounds in the area. The proposed addition of a Consumer Price Index to help keep pace with rising costs in labor and supplies would both support continued good management of the campground fee program and would decrease the administrative burden of securing additional supplemental funding from other sources, thus reducing cost. The number of *Federal Register* notices would be decreased and RAC time spent on small fee increases would be decreased.

### C. Public Outreach

Prior to adding these five fee sites to the fee structure, the CRVFO is conducting the following outreach efforts to notify the public of its opportunity to review and comment on the proposal:

- Posting the Draft Business Plan on the CRVFO website
- Posting a notice in the affected campgrounds;
- Issuing a News Release to area-wide print and broadcast media;
- Publishing a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register*
- Posting the published *Federal Register* notice at each of the seven proposed fee sites

In addition, the CRVFO will be presenting the campground fee increase proposal to the BLM Northwest Resource Advisory Council (NW RAC) for its formal review. The NW RAC is a 15-member citizen advisory panel that provides advice and recommendations to the BLM on resource and land management issues for public lands in Colorado. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act mandates that a RAC approve all BLM recreation fee proposals..

## D. Conclusion

### Overview

The CRVFO proposes a new campground fee structure to meet current and anticipated future needs. Currently only two of its six campgrounds charge fees. The current fee program revenues do not cover the current basic maintenance costs of all six campgrounds or the Wolcott Day Use Site. Updating the fee structure will allow the CRVFO to proactively address current and future maintenance and capital improvement needs at its campgrounds. With the increases to existing fees and implementing new fees, the CRVFO campground fees will still be less than nearby private campgrounds and comparable to campgrounds on nearby U.S. Forest Service lands. While the CRVFO has been very successful in getting appropriated dollars to put towards capital improvements, While in past years the BLM has been able to supplement user fees with appropriated funds to cover maintenance and some limited capital improvements, the BLM's fee collection authority allows for, and is intended to promote, recreation site users bearing a large portion of the costs associated with the sites they use. Undoubtedly appropriated funds will still be required for many of these large improvements, but the additional fee income would allow improvements to be implemented sooner and with a smaller burden on appropriated funds. Fees collected at these sites will stay within the CRVFO campground program, providing direct benefits back to the users of the sites.

### Anticipated Results of Adding Five New Fee Sites

*Benefits to Recreational Users:* The fees collected at the seven fee sites would ensure that services would continue to be offered in the CRVFO recreation program. In addition, some revenues could be used to gradually improve campground and day-use site infrastructure as part of routine upgrades or to expand user facilities.

Campground improvements are quite important as the BLM campgrounds are reaching an age where replacement of some of the infrastructure is necessary to maintain health and human safety. The CRVFO BLM would also pursue other funding options to address larger infrastructure needs. There is increased demand for camping experiences on BLM lands, and the addition of new fee sites and increased user fees to the program are needed to accommodate this use.

#### *Benefits to the Local Economy*

As explained above, the local economy is heavily dependent upon tourism. Many tourists prefer to camp at public campgrounds; capacity at White River National Forest campgrounds is exceeded for the majority of the camping season. These campers rely on BLM and private campgrounds as many cannot afford the high cost of hotel accommodations in the area or would prefer developed camping to dispersed camping.

#### *Benefits to the Environment*

The campground fee enables the CRVFO BLM to operate the camping program. This serves to reduce negative impacts to sites and to resources associated with higher levels of visitation in small areas. By providing campgrounds for visitors, the BLM is able to contain impacts to these small areas. Human waste generated by campers is contained and processed properly at approved

facilities. Garbage is collected and disposed of at a proper facility. Campfires are contained in metal rings, enhancing fire safety; ash is disposed of properly. The camping fee charged for these facilities makes their construction and maintenance possible, thus benefiting the environment.

#### *Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low-Income Populations*

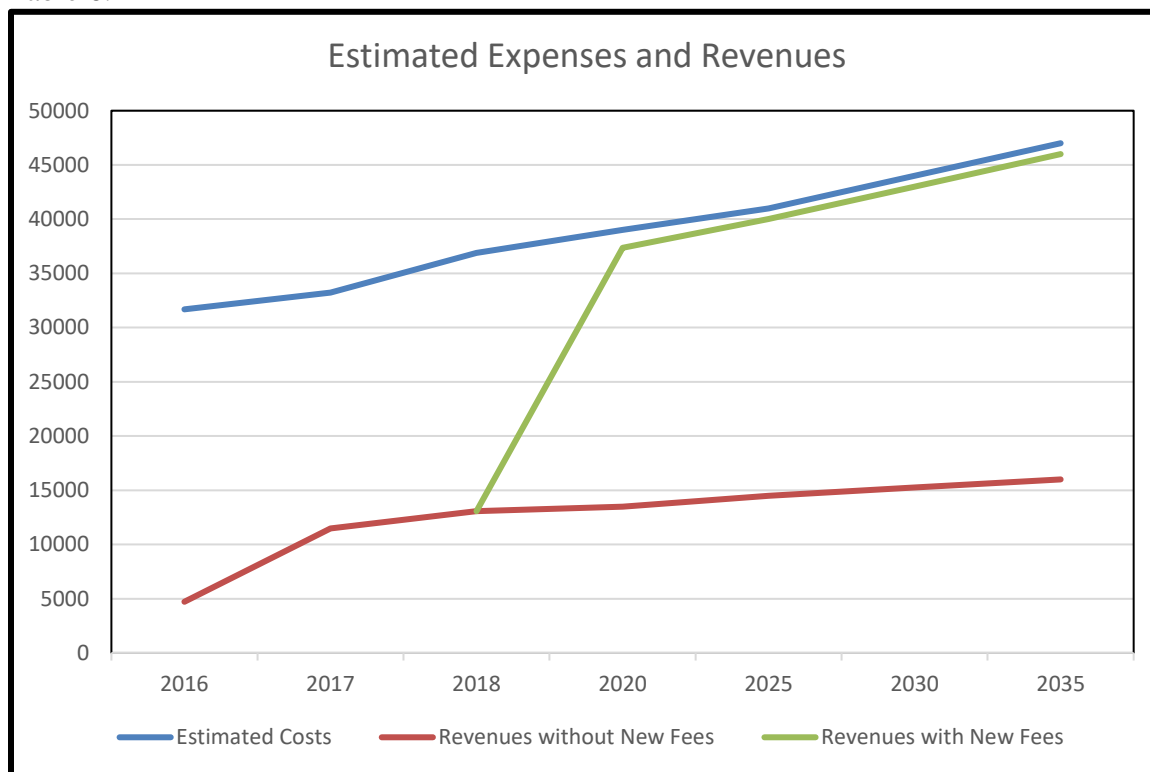
The socioeconomic data on BLM campers is unknown; however, those who vacation away from home are more likely to be above-average in income. Furthermore, BLM campgrounds offer a very low-cost alternative to staying in a hotel in the area (where prices range from \$120 to well over \$500 per room per night during the season). This low cost alternative is particularly important at the group sites, where groups can enjoy the amenities of the area at a very low cost.

As with the other fee campgrounds, the addition of these five sites to the fee program and the increase in existing fees would limit any negative impacts to campers because the fees would be kept comparable to other public camping opportunities in the area. Impacts to low-income populations are positive as the small proposed increase for fees at these campgrounds still provides a cheaper alternative to private campgrounds or hotels for lodging.

#### *Funding Balance*

Table 6 below shows an estimate of how the addition of fees at the five proposed sites would impact revenues of the recreation program as compared to estimated costs. This assumes the CRVFO's 27.5% average occupancy rate is maintained. This excludes the estimated long term capital improvement costs, which would still largely be borne through appropriated funds, although a larger portion of Special Recreation Permit fees could be used for site improvements. The graphs also don't include the estimated revenues from the proposed reserveable group sites. In other areas, reserveable sites of any kind have proven popular. If occupancy rates for the group sites were 35% with group sizes of 10 on average, an additional approximately \$8,000 in revenue per year would be expected. This additional funding could be applied to address site improvements over time.

Table 6.



#### Anticipated Result of Not Increasing Fees or Adding the New Fee Sites to the Fee Program

##### *Negative Impacts to Recreational Users*

The BLM campgrounds are reaching an age where replacement costs of infrastructure will be increasing. For instance, several pit toilets are reaching the end of their service life and need to be replaced. The current fee structure is a long way from meeting the replacement cost of campground facilities. The proposed fee structure increase would be partially used to cover replacement costs of their infrastructure. A failure to add the campground fee would mean that aging infrastructure likely would not be replaced in a timely manner to maintain site quality.

##### *Negative Impacts to Local Economy*

Not implementing the proposed fee structure could lead to an erosion of services, such as cleaning, at campgrounds. This would eventually impact the recreation sector of the local economy, making people less likely to camp on BLM-managed lands. Vacation dollars are entirely discretionary; people can spend their vacation dollars in many different locales. Should people be less likely to recreate in the area because of poor or unmaintained facilities, the local economy may suffer.

##### *Negative Impacts to the Environment*

Failure to maintain the campground program would result in the reestablishment of many of the negative impacts to the environment that provided the impetus to the campground program. For example, should the BLM be unable to regularly service toilets along the river, people would be less likely to utilize toilets. Additionally, recreation maintenance staff conduct site cleanup and

weed control; a fee decrease would mean that such work would be reduced and could lead to negative impacts to the environment.

*Socioeconomic Impacts, including Low-Income Populations*

Public camping provides a low cost lodging alternative for users visiting the area. Were fees to erode such that the group sites could not be maintained or serviced, the group site opportunity might have to be curtailed. Failure to offer these low-cost group sites to youth groups, scout groups and other such assemblages could have negative impacts on lower-income populations.

**E. Colorado River Valley Field Office Recommendation**

After careful consideration of the fee program and the anticipated revenues and expenditures outlined in the *BLM Colorado River Valley Campgrounds and Day Use Sites Business Plan*, the BLM CRVFO recommends adding the existing developed campgrounds, adding parking fees at Wolcott Day Use site and increasing fees at the two existing CRVFO campgrounds to the list of approved fee sites. Fees would be charged as outlined in Tables 1 and 2 above.

This proposal directly implements the BLM Colorado Recreation Strategy “Connecting with Communities” Goals of Identifying recreation areas/sites connected with gateway communities to prioritize funding, partnerships and management (Goal 1, Strategic Focus 2); prioritize recreation proposals that are mutually beneficial to public land resources and the surrounding community. This proposal corresponds to common visions and objectives and sustains the distinctive desired recreational settings of the surrounding landscape (Goal 2, Strategic Focus 2); and sets an annual program of work priorities that will allow fiscal and human capital resources to be placed where most needed (Goal 4, Strategic Focus 1).